

## **ACICIS prepares for return of Australian university students to Indonesia with \$1.97 million in fresh New Colombo Plan funding**

**PERTH – Thursday, 10 February, 2022.** New funding of \$1.97 million from the Australian Government will help to kick-start the return of Australian undergraduate students to Indonesia for study through the [Australian Consortium for 'In-Country' Indonesian Studies](#) (ACICIS) in 2022 and 2023.

Last month the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) [published the list of projects successfully funded under the 2022 round](#) of the Department's [New Colombo Plan Mobility Program](#) (NCPMP). In total, \$22 million is to be provided to 33 Australian universities (or consortia of universities) – to support more than 6,000 Australian undergraduates to study in the Indo-Pacific between January 2022 and September 2023. Of the \$22 million in NCPMP funding announced last week, approximately \$4.8 million (or 22%) is earmarked to support study in Indonesia. This makes Indonesia the most-funded destination under the 2022 round by a significant margin – ahead of Japan (\$2.5 million), India (\$2.48 million), Singapore (\$1.9 million), and Vietnam (\$1.7 million).

The funding for ACICIS will provide 460 mobility grants to support students from the consortium's 16 Australian [member universities](#) to undertake short format or semester-long study in Indonesia in a wide range of fields including law, agriculture, journalism, public health, international relations, and creative arts.

Speaking from the organisation's national secretariat at The University of Western Australia in Perth, ACICIS Consortium Director, Liam Prince, cautiously welcomed the funding announcement. "New funding to support Australian students to study in Indonesia on ACICIS programs is always a positive development," Mr Prince said. "Funding of this quantum is a welcome endorsement of ACICIS' standing in the eyes of the Department (DFAT) and of the consortium's status as key partner in the delivery of the Australian Government's New Colombo Plan – particularly as it has been implemented in Indonesia since 2014," Mr Prince added.

However, with Indonesian universities not yet receiving international students back on their campuses, and Australian universities yet to greenlight the resumption of study abroad, Mr Prince observed that significant obstacles would need to be overcome before this new funding could be utilised for the purposes for which it is intended.

"We are champing at the bit to welcome ACICIS students back to Indonesia just as soon as it is safe and practical to do so", Mr Prince said. "This has been the longest hiatus in Australian students studying in Indonesia since ACICIS was established 26 years ago -- and this includes the disruptions of 1998 (fall of Suharto), 1999 (East Timorese referendum) and bombings of the early to mid-2000s."

Prior to the pandemic, [Australia was sending nearly 60,000 university students abroad each year](#). Over 2,000 students travelled to Indonesia in 2019 for educational purposes – [540 students doing so on ACICIS programs](#). "Pre-COVID," explained Mr Prince, "Australian student interest in studying abroad in the Indo-Pacific -- and in Indonesia particularly -- was at an all-time high thanks, primarily, to six years of funding continuity and momentum built by the New Colombo Plan."

"The pandemic brought this momentum to a hard stop almost overnight", said Mr Prince.

ACICIS stared down the threat of closure in mid-2020 as the organisation's income -- and capacity to pay staff --

# ACICIS Study Indonesia

## Media release



remained contingent on the ability of Australian students to physically travel to Indonesia. The organisation went as far as launching a [public fundraising campaign](#) in June 2020 -- raising almost \$50,000 in donations from ACICIS' network of almost 4,000 alumni.

In August of 2020 [the consortium secured a financial lifeline](#) in the form of the Australian Foreign Minister's approval of temporary changes to the New Colombo Plan to permit virtual or online delivery of NCP projects. "But for the Foreign Minister's intervention in 2020, ACICIS would not have made it this far through the pandemic," acknowledged Mr Prince.

Between November 2020 and February 2022, ACICIS has delivered Indonesia-focused virtual student mobility experiences to nearly 500 students from the consortium's member universities. ACICIS' success in pivoting its programming online [was recognised in August 2021 by the International Education Association of Australia \(IEAA\)](#), which awarded ACICIS the IEAA Excellence Award for Innovation in International Education.

"While the pivot to online programs has ensured that the momentum of the New Colombo Plan has not completely dissipated, and certainly provided a vital means by which ACICIS has been able to sustain itself during the pandemic," said Mr Prince, "we really must get Australian students back into Indonesia soon – not only for the sake of the New Colombo Plan and the survival of ACICIS, but for the future health of bilateral ties between Australia and Indonesia." Mr Prince said ACICIS was reasonably confident of being able overcome the remaining barriers to student travel to Indonesia by the middle of the year. "Our staff in both Australia and Indonesia are busily preparing for the resumption of in-person program delivery in Indonesia from second semester of this year."

The New Colombo Plan Mobility Program has already supported over 1,600 Australian undergraduate students to undertake ACICIS programs in Indonesia since the scheme's launch in 2014. ACICIS has also supported numerous New Colombo Plan Scholars to undertake semester-long and full-year study in Indonesia.

*The Australian Consortium for 'In-Country' Indonesian Studies known as ACICIS (pronounced "Ah-Chee-Chis") is a national, not-for-profit educational consortium that develops and facilitates study and internship programs for Australian university students in Indonesia. Since its establishment in 1995, more than 4,000 students have undertaken study in Indonesia through the consortium's programs. In 2020, ACICIS was recognised by DFAT as a [highlight of the first 70 years of bilateral relations](#) between Australian and Indonesia. For more information, please visit: [www.acicis.edu.au](http://www.acicis.edu.au).*

For further media comment, please contact:



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*The Australian Consortium for 'In-Country' Indonesian Studies known as ACICIS (pronounced "ah-chee-chis" as an Indonesian would) has been opening doors to tertiary institutions throughout Indonesia since 1994, offering a range of study options and in-country support to help students gain invaluable first-hand experience of one of the richest and most diverse countries in the world.*